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->From the Editor's Keyboard
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"Saying it like it is!"

Well, the recent heat wave has diminished quite a bit, at least here on the east coast. That's a relief. It's still been hot and humid, but not as nasty as it was last week. Maybe I'm just getting a little bit older, but there gets to be a point where this type of weather makes life almost unbearable. I guess when I was a lot younger, and had no responsibilities, I could just head out to the beach and enjoy myself. Now, it's hope to find an air-conditioned place and try to stay cool!

I wish that Joe was feeling better because I know he'd have quite a few comments regarding the current political scene here in the United States, with the ongoing battle over the budget fiasco going on right now. Here we have partisan politics at its finest (ie, worst!)? Personally, I look at this debacle as a prelude to the next election! As a taxpayer, I'm tired of being a pawn for the politicians. They're supposed to be working for us, not for themselves. I'll leave it at that because talking about politics makes me ill. So, let's move on to something better!

Until next time...

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->In This Week's Gaming Section
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- Nintendo 3DS Price Slashed!
New Metal Gear Solid Delayed!
Blaming Video Games Racist!
And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News
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- The Latest Gaming News!

After a dreadful quarter for sales of its 3DS gaming system, Nintendo has decided to drastically reduce the portable gaming device's price - from \$250 to \$170 - beginning Aug. 12. Although the hand-held console sold 3.6 million units in its first five weeks of release earlier this year, raising hopes of long-term success, the second quarter produced just 710,000 sales, according to The Wall Street Journal, sending Nintendo's stock plummeting more than 20 percent on Thursday. What can we learn from the Nintendo 3DS' implosion? Here, four takeaways:

1. The 3DS bombed because it was overpriced...

The 3DS' original (inflated) price tag was "motivated by ego and greed," says Chris Morris at Gamasutra. At \$250, the company "ignored the budget-conscious consumer that had become the company's lifeblood." But maybe it's not too late. "By slashing over 30 percent off of the price tag, Nintendo is lining up" the 3DS for success, says Richard George at IGN.

2. ... And has overpriced games

"The price drop to \$170 is Step 1 toward making 3DS more relevant," says Chris Kohler at Wired, but Nintendo should develop better games at lower prices, too. Right now, a game costs about \$40. "When you're a kid, \$40 means you get new games on your birthday, at Christmas, and maybe after getting a root canal if you cry enough." And remember, "a game console without games is no game console at all," says Ricardo Bilton at ZDNet.

3. Plus, the console was marketed poorly

Blame Nintendo's dense marketing strategy, says Jason Raznick at Benzinga. "The company is most successful when it releases a ton of games people want to play" in sync with the gaming system. But it released the 3DS "without a single game people wanted to own." Worse, Nintendo had the hubris to brag that it was pricing the 3DS so high because of "the anticipated demand." Brilliant strategy, guys.

4. And the hand-held market is shifting

"With the rise of smartphones and tablets, the handheld market is getting even more competitive," says Max Parker at the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Nintendo used to dominate in the on-the-go gaming industry, but that's changed. "Now there are more people fighting over the same slice of pie," and Nintendo needs to adjust accordingly. "I worry, though, that the company doesn't yet comprehend the challenge posed by smartphones," says Slate's Farhad Manjoo.

Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D for Nintendo 3DS Delayed Until 2012

There are two schools of thought on Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D for Nintendo 3DS. One group believe that the PlayStation 2 game was never meant to be played on a handheld device, and that the evidence so far suggests that too little has been done to make the 3D update more friendly to those on the go. The other group can't wait to have a portable version of the classic title, even if that means spending the entire length of one commute or another watching a single cutscene. It's the second group that isn't going to like today's news: the release of Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D has been delayed until 2012.

The news comes from Konami (confirmed by Kotaku), though that's all the information we've got to go on right now. Other than knowing it's coming at

some point next year, there s no indication of when that will be. Not even a window. You could argue that there s a time limit on this release too; Kotaku correctly notes that an HD version of the game is coming to Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3. The 3D presentation of the portable version might not be enough to sway fans away from playing instead on a console (especially with Achievements/Trophies in the mix) if the two re-releases come out too close together.

Fortunately for 3DS owners, there s a solid lineup of games coming to the new platform this fall. First-party offerings like Super Mario and Kid Icarus: Uprising as well as third-party releases like Shinobi and Cave Story 3D. Lots to look forward to for the little handheld - just no Metal Gear yet.

Women Say Video Games Aren t Just For Boys Anymore

Maybe at some point video games were thought of as just for boys - but not anymore. Studies show girls are just as interested in playing video games as boys.

Despite statistics, video game marketing is still all boy . Game developers say they aren t even sure what females want - but there are some North Texas women, already in the business, who can tell them.

Grace Blessey, 28, has a law degree and now wants to become a video game designer through the video game education program, or the Guildhall, at Southern Methodist University.

"I always liked video games," said Blessey. "But at some point, I realized I really just wanted to do something more creative, like truly artistic."

From Blessey s perspective, what women want from a video game is the mental challenge. "Ultimately what it is, it s like the hand-eye coordination challenge that people like. It s like pointing, can I get it while it s moving fast and shoot it?"

That type of challenge is one of the things Elizabeth Stringer likes about video games. "You look at who plays games and why they play those games. You stop looking at gender at all," said Stringer, who is one of Blessey s professors. "You don t need to draw those lines. You don t need to draw that division."

Women who are already working in the industry say they just want a good video game with female characters.

"I want to play a pink Master Chief," said video game enthusiast Alexis Ruiz. "I want to have a unicorn on my shoulder when I m shooting other people online. I want to be identified as a girl."

Ruiz says she s been playing video games since she was eight years old. "Christmas morning I woke up and I got the Barbie House and my brother got the Nintendo 88," she recalled. "And, I loved my Barbie house, don t get me wrong but there was nothing quite as satisfying as destroying him [her brother] at Duck Hunt."

At the age of 28 she s busting female video game myths as a Community Relations Manager for Dallas-based video game developer Terminal Reality.

That's where Jessica Nida-Wright has been building her career as a graphic designer.

"Women want a good game," she said. "Women want a game that plays well, that maybe has a good story to it. They want the same things."

Wright graduated two years ago from the Guildhall program. "I think the biggest barrier is that they [women] want to be allowed into that tree house that has that sign No Girls Allowed on it," Nida-Wright said.

But experts at Grapevine-based video game and entertainment software retailer GameStop say women are already in stores buying half the video games.

Though some women might be making those purchases for someone else, 44-percent of them say they want something other than casual, exercise or music games; which is what many developers think women like.

GameStop's Yavia Gipson said, "Women cannot be kept in a box in video games. They're playing everything from Sims, to Call of Duty, to Super Mario Brothers."

Blessey is answering a call to the video game industry and hopes, some day, to pave the way for other women.

"It's always in the back of my mind. Like, I would like to influence games that can bring more women in as players but also like someday be, maybe a role model to get more young girls wanting to come into the industry," she said.

While it seems the video game industry has all but ignored women, women can't ignore the video games. They're just too fun.

Expert Calls Blaming Video Games On Tragic Massacres Racist

The recent massacre in Oslo, Norway that left 76 dead has once again opened up an international debate centering on violent video games. The terrorist, Anders Behring Breivik, wrote about how he used Activision's Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 and World of Warcraft to help train for the attacks.

But clinical psychologist Christopher Ferguson, a leading expert on video game violence and mass killings at Texas A&M International University, said video games aren't to blame for this tragedy. Nor are games like Doom and Quake to blame for past U.S. massacres like Columbine. In fact, he believes placing the blame on video games whenever a white male is guilty of a killing spree is racist.

"I know it's a little controversial to say but there's a certain type of racism in place with these killings," said Ferguson. "When shootings happen in an inner city in minority-populated schools, video games are never brought up. But when these things happen in white majority schools and in the suburbs, people start to freak out and video games are inevitably blamed. I think that there's a certain element of racism or ignorance here."

Ferguson said that mass killings are going to happen and there's nothing anyone can do about it. Fortunately, they're not going to happen very often.

They're like lightning strikes. You can't predict them or stay them off, but society doesn't want to hear that.

"People really want to know what kind of boogeyman can we hang this on and video games are still the top choice when it comes to any type of tragedy," said Ferguson.

But things are changing. Ferguson said that video games haven't received the same type of sensationalist media attention with the Oslo killings as past U.S. massacres have. Part of this could be because the tragedy occurred far from U.S. soil and no Americans were involved. But it also could be that video games have become so ingrained in our culture and our lives, that more people understand that they're just another form of entertainment.

"There are groups out there who are going to blame video games on everything," said Ferguson. "They're like ambulance chasers, really. I think it's irresponsible and thoughtless to try to make political gain off of someone else's tragedy, but they're going to do it. That's what they do. But even those groups have been much quieter with the Oslo tragedy."

Things are a lot more muted since 1999. After the Columbine massacre left 12 students and a teacher dead, special interest groups and media were actually clamoring for a causal relationship between first-person shooters like Doom and Quake and the planned killings by high school students Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold.

"Scientifically, the idea that video game violence, movie, or television violence contributes to mass homicides is pretty much a debunked idea that has no real basis to it," said Ferguson. "I think certainly the Supreme Court case helped, especially since they were so clear in pointing out that current research was not able to support that line of reasoning."

Columbine was a pivotal sociological moment in the violent video game debate, according to Ferguson. He's done extensive research and written numerous papers on the topic.

"Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, Senator Lieberman, and other politicians were out there making grandiose claims about violent video games, including Pac-Man and Zaxxon, acting as a digital poison corrupting the minds of youths," said Ferguson. "Columbine wasn't the first school shooting linked to video games - there were incidents in Kadoka, Kentucky, Jonesboro, Arkansas and other places - but it was the biggest. And it galvanized politicians, special interest groups and the mainstream media against video games."

Ferguson said that rather than have these groups focus on the mental health problems and psychological issues that were the cause of the tragedy, they turned to violent video games. The crusade was to ban games in the hopes that by illuminating violence games, the problem would simply go away.

"What was so scary about Columbine was that it could happen anywhere, even in a seemingly safe suburban high school," explained Ferguson. "People wanted something to blame and video games became the target. And they wanted to just regulate games away."

But something good came from this tragedy. The scientific and research community, including Ferguson, decided to explore whether there was any truth to the media and political claims. Prior to 2,000, there was very little research dedicated to violence and video games. Today, there's

extensive research on the topic. The Supreme Court used much of this research, including studies by Ferguson, to make its recent decision on violent games.

"One thing we've learned from research is that approximately 95 percent of young boys have played a violent video game," said Ferguson. "That becomes a tricky thing when these mass homicides occur and the shooter is a young male. The odds are he's played violent video games."

But that wasn't the case with the Virginia Tech massacre in 2007, which is the deadliest shooting by a single gunman in U.S. history. Ferguson said that fact that killer Seung-Hui Cho didn't play video games is a statistical anomaly. It also shows that these things happen randomly and video games aren't to blame.

"Linking the playing of violent video games to a mass homicide when the perpetrator is a young male is like blaming the killing on the fact that he was wearing sneakers," said Ferguson. "The base rate of that behavior is so common that it has no predictive value whatsoever."

Ferguson said that it's also interesting that when older males, or females, become mass killers, the media, politicians and special interest groups never bring up video games as a cause. When you look at the fact that the average gamer is now 37 years old and 25 percent of gamers are over 50 (according to the Entertainment Software Association), this shows just how 'off' these groups are in targeting violent games.

Unfortunately, Oslo won't be the last massacre in the world. Nor will it be the last time violent video games are brought to the international spotlight. But as more people play video games on mobile phones and tablets, on PCs and on gaming consoles and portable devices; more people out there understand that games are entertainment. And games are no more at fault for a crazy person going on a rampage than movies or TV shows.

China Bans 'Booth Babes' from Video Game Convention

The Chinese government has pressured companies who are attending the ongoing ChinaJoy Expo, a video game convention in Shanghai, to not use scantily clad women to help promote their products, reports Reuters.

The appearance of these women - known in China as 'spicy girls,' or 'booth babes' in the US - has the potential to violate China's government directive against 'vulgarity,' according to a report from Shanghai Daily. The newfound paranoia in the industry is said to have come from a recent government crackdown on video games deemed too vulgar.

That doesn't mean no women are allowed to attend - though many ChinaJoy attendees were less than please to discover the new dress code, which allows no more than two-thirds of a girl's back to show, and prevents the placement of logos in 'sensitive positions' on the body, like the breasts or buttocks.

"To be honest, I came here largely for spicy girls," said ChinaJoy attendee, Xavier Du.

"I'm satisfied with the female models for this year's ChinaJoy - I care more about them rather than only sexy clothing."

The prohibition of booth babes from a video game convention may sound like the work of an extreme communist dictatorship, but it actually happened here in the US, first.

In 2006, the famous E3 convention in Los Angeles forbid vendors from hiring the semi-clad models for their booths - it had gotten to a ridiculous level by that year - and threatened to impose a \$5,000 on any company that tried to break the rules, starting with 2007. As is the case in China, the change came primarily from pressure placed on the video game industry by Washington politicians who were hellbent on blocking violent and sexually explicit content from video games.

As anyone who attended E3 in 2007 knows, plenty of companies took the five grand hit, and the booth babe tradition stayed alive in the face of adversity. And in 2009, after attendance to E3 dropped, the convention organizers revamped the rules and reopened the floodgates of glitter-covered skin, which came pouring back in, for better or worse.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Internet Privacy Controls Challenge Tech Industry

The federal government has put Google, Microsoft, Apple and other technology companies on notice: Give consumers a way prevent advertisers from tracking their movements across the Web - or face regulation.

Yet for all its innovative know-how and entrepreneurial spirit, the technology industry has yet to agree on a simple, meaningful solution to protect consumer privacy on the Internet.

So privacy watchdogs and lawmakers are stepping up the pressure, calling for laws that would require companies to stop the digital surveillance of consumers who don't want to be tracked. They argue that effective privacy tools are long overdue from an industry that typically moves at breakneck speed.

"I want ordinary consumers to know what is being done with their personal information, and I want to give them the power to do something about it," Senate Commerce Committee Chairman John D. Rockefeller, D-W. Va., said at a recent hearing.

Washington's call to arms is a response to growing concern that invasive Internet marketing practices are eroding privacy online as every consumer move is observed, analyzed and harvested for profit.

Online publishers, advertisers and ad networks use "cookies," Web beacons and other sophisticated tracking tools to follow consumers around the Internet - monitoring what sites they visit and what links they click, what

they search for and what they buy. Then they mine that information to deliver what they hope will be relevant pitches - a practice called behavioral advertising.

"Right now we have a lawful system for tracking all of our movements online," says Christopher Calabrese, legislative counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union. "And not only is it legal. It's the business model."

Calls for online privacy protections began with the Federal Trade Commission, which has challenged the industry to offer a digital tracking off switch. The FTC envisions something akin to the government's existing "Do Not Call" registry for telemarketers. Consumers who don't want to receive telemarketing calls can add their numbers to the list online or over the phone.

Companies including Microsoft and Mozilla have responded with various "Do Not Track" technologies. But an industry-wide solution is not close at hand.

That's because putting the Do Not Track concept into practice is much more complicated than simply adding phone numbers to a database. The challenge is in reaching industry consensus on what Do Not Track obligations should mean, designing standard technology tools that are easy for consumers to use and setting common rules that all websites and advertisers will follow.

One big part of the problem is that the industry needs to find a way to let consumers halt intrusive online marketing practices without preventing tracking critical for the Internet to function. After all, Internet companies rely on tracking not just to target ads, but also to analyze website traffic patterns, store online passwords and deliver customized content like local news. Nobody wants to stop those things.

Also complicating efforts to reach broad agreement is the lucrative nature of behavioral advertising.

Industry leaders argue that many consumers like targeted ads since they deliver personalized pitches that people may want. And because these ads tend to be more effective, advertisers are willing to pay more for them, says David Hallerman, an analyst with eMarketer.

Research firm eMarketer projects U.S. spending on online behavioral advertising will hit \$2.6 billion by 2014, up from \$775 million in 2008.

That enables Internet companies to offer everything from online stock quotes to unlimited email storage for free, says Anne Toth, Yahoo's chief trust officer. Without sophisticated advertising technology, more websites and services could wind up behind pay walls, companies warn.

The problem, argues Jeff Chester, executive director of the Center for Digital Democracy, a privacy group, is that many consumers don't know they're being tracked. And even if they do, they have no idea what happens to their information - whether it is used to create personal profiles, merged with offline databases or sold to data brokers - and no practical way to stop the data collection.

With growing alarm in Washington, a coalition of industry trade groups - called the Digital Advertising Alliance - has established a self-regulatory program that places icons inside the online ads of participating advertisers, ad networks and websites. The icon links to a

site that explains online targeting, and lets consumers install an opt-out cookie if they just want standard ads.

Among the groups participating in the alliance are the Interactive Advertising Bureau and the Direct Marketing Association, as well as individual companies including Google and Yahoo.

Even so, these efforts don't go far enough for the FTC. While the agency has not endorsed any particular Do Not Track technology, it believes one promising approach could involve including a setting inside Web browsers. Now the browser companies, led by Microsoft and Mozilla, are responding with different approaches:

- * Microsoft has a feature called "tracking protection" in Internet Explorer 9.0 that lets users create "black lists" of Web sites to be blocked and "white lists" of sites that are deemed acceptable. Users can set their browsers to automatically build these lists or can download existing lists.

- * Mozilla has a setting in its Firefox 4 browser that sends a signal to alert websites, advertisers and ad networks if a user does not want to be tracked.

Apple is expected to include a similar feature, called a "header," in its Safari browser. Microsoft, too, recently added the feature to IE 9.0.

- * Google's Chrome browser is piggybacking on the Digital Advertising Alliance by offering a plug-in that saves opt-out cookies even if other cookies are erased. One criticism of the industry program is that users lose their opt-out preferences whenever they clear their cookies.

For such tools to work, however, there must be industry consensus on what Do Not Track obligations should actually mean. And right now, there is little agreement.

Nearly everyone accepts that publishers should be able to measure traffic volumes on their own sites, for instance. But should advertisers be allowed to track how many visitors see or click on their ads?

The industry's self-regulatory program, for one, does not turn off data collection. Consumers who install an opt-out cookie no longer receive targeted ads from participating companies, but may still be tracked for non-advertising purposes. That doesn't satisfy privacy watchdogs.

Microsoft Deputy General Counsel Erich Andersen says tracking protection offers a way around this debate since it lets consumers decide what to block. But this approach worries advertisers since it can block ads altogether, even generic ads.

And anyway, with Do Not Track signals in several popular browsers, websites and advertisers need to agree on how to respond, says Jules Polonetsky, director of the Future of Privacy Forum, an industry-backed group. Otherwise, he says, Do Not Track obligations could get defined for them by browsers or government officials.

Equally important for Do Not Track to succeed, the technology must be easy to find and use. If Do Not Track tools are too confusing or involve too much effort, people won't embrace them, warns Marc Rotenberg, executive director of the Electronic Privacy Information Center. "We can't expect users to spend a lot of time reconfiguring their browsers," he says.

Privacy watchdogs are gravitating to Mozilla's approach as particularly user-friendly. But it presents a different challenge: ensuring websites, advertisers and ad networks respect user requests not to be tracked. While Microsoft's tracking protection blocks unwanted content - and requires no compliance by Websites and advertisers - a signal in a browser means nothing if it is not honored.

"Without anyone on the other end to recognize it, it's a tree falling in the woods without anyone to hear it," says Mike Zaneis, general counsel for the Interactive Advertising Bureau. Zaneis insists the Digital Advertising Alliance offers the best approach since so many Websites and advertisers are on board.

Alex Fowler, Mozilla's global privacy and public policy leader, says the browser maker is talking with many big websites, advertisers and ad networks about honoring its Do Not Track signal. And many are open to the idea. Still, so far only a handful of industry players have actually pledged to honor the signal.

And that, privacy watchdogs say, shows why the government needs to get involved.

Senator Rockefeller is sponsoring a bill that would direct the FTC to write binding, industry-wide Do Not Track rules. There are similar bills in the House and the California legislature.

The Internet marketing industry wants to head off those efforts and insists it just needs more time to establish meaningful privacy controls.

For now, FTC Chairman Jon Leibowitz is willing to give the industry a chance before calling for legislation. Even without a government mandate, he noted, it's in the industry's self-interest to make Do Not Track work. After all, Leibowitz says, "nobody wants to be on the wrong side of consumers."

Scotland Yard: We've Arrested LulzSec Spokesman

Scotland Yard's cybercrime unit has arrested a teenager it suspects of working as the spokesman for the Lulz Security hacking collective, officials said Wednesday.

The Metropolitan Police's Central e-Crime Unit arrested a 18-year-old at an address in Scotland's remote Shetland Islands, the force said in a statement. His name wasn't released, but police said he was believed to be "Topiary," one of LulzSec's most prominent members.

Police originally gave his age as 19 but later issued a correction.

LulzSec shot to prominence in May with attacks on the U.S. Public Broadcasting Service - whose website it defaced by posting a bogus story claiming that the late rapper Tupac Shakur had been discovered alive in New Zealand.

The group is a spin-off of Anonymous, an amorphous collection of Internet enthusiasts, pranksters and activists whose targets have included the Church of Scientology, the music industry, and financial companies

including Visa and MasterCard.

Topiary was linked to both groups, serving as the on-again, off-again media liaison for the publicity-hungry hackers.

In his only known television interview, on the "David Pakman Show" earlier this year, Topiary phoned in via Skype to feud with Shirley Phelps-Roper of the Westboro Baptist Church, a Kansas-based group notorious for picketing the funerals of slain American soldiers.

Anonymous vandalized the church's website live over the course of the interview.

In conversations with The Associated Press, Topiary said he controlled LulzSec's Twitter feed, which garnered some 300,000 followers over the course of its six-week-long Internet rampage.

LulzSec has claimed responsibility for breaches at pornography websites, gaming companies, and law enforcement organizations. It's also claimed credit for harassing seemingly random targets including an obscure New Jersey-based magnet manufacturer.

One its most spectacular hacks was against Sony Pictures Entertainment. The group posted the usernames, passwords, email addresses and phone numbers of tens of thousands of people, many of whom had given Sony their information for sweepstakes draws. Another stinging series of breaches last month targeted Arizona's police force in protest against its contentious immigration law. Officers had to scramble to change their numbers because their phones were being jammed with calls.

Shortly thereafter the group abruptly announced it was disbanding, although Topiary said at the time that the group wasn't bowing to police pressure.

"We're not quitting because we're afraid of law enforcement," he said in a Skype call. "The press are getting bored of us, and we're getting bored of us."

Attempts to reach Topiary since then have been unsuccessful, although his group recently re-emerged from retirement, defacing The Sun newspaper's website with a fake story claiming that media tycoon Rupert Murdoch had died. In one of its last messages, LulzSec said it was working with unnamed media outlets on a WikiLeaks-style release of emails it claimed to have stolen from the tabloid.

Topiary's once-plentiful Twitter feed was practically wiped clean Wednesday. The only remaining post, from nearly a week ago, read: "You cannot arrest an idea."

The latest arrest is one of an increasing number claimed by law enforcement in Britain and the United States in connection to their investigations into Anonymous and its offshoots. Last week, the FBI, British and Dutch officials carried out 21 arrests, many of them related to the group's attacks on Internet payment provider PayPal Inc., which has been targeted over its refusal to process donations to WikiLeaks.

Last month another 19-year-old, Ryan Cleary, was charged with attacks on Britain's Serious Organized Crime Agency and various U.K.-based music sites. Although at least one of the attacks he was charged with seemed linked to LulzSec, Topiary claimed at the time that Cleary was at most only tangentially involved with the group.

Scotland Yard said Wednesday it was also searching a residential address in Lincolnshire, in central England, and interviewing an unnamed 17-year-old in connection with the investigation. The second teen has not been arrested.

Senior US Cybersecurity Official Resigns

A Department of Homeland Security (DHS) official responsible for defending US government networks against cyberattacks resigned on Monday.

Randy Vickers stepped down as director of the US Computer Emergency Readiness Team (US-CERT), the operational arm of the DHS's National Cyber Security Division.

Vickers' resignation was announced in an email to staff from Bobbie Stempfley, the DHS's acting assistant secretary for cybersecurity and communications.

A DHS official declined to provide an explanation for his departure saying the department does not discuss personnel matters.

But Information Week, which first reported Vickers' resignation, noted that it followed a string of cyberattacks on US government networks by hacker groups such as Anonymous and Lulz Security.

Lulz Security has claimed responsibility during the past few weeks for attacks on the websites of the Central Intelligence Agency, the US Senate, the Arizona Department of Public Safety and others.

US Deputy Defense Secretary William Lynn said earlier this month that a foreign intelligence service swiped 24,000 computer files from a US defense contractor in March in one of the largest ever cyberattacks on a Pentagon supplier.

The Washington-based US-CERT is responsible for the protection of US government computer networks and also cooperates on cybersecurity with the private sector and state and local authorities

Stempfley, in the email obtained by AFP, said Vickers' resignation was effective on Friday. She said he would be replaced by US-CERT deputy director Lee Rock until a new director is named.

"Lee has been the deputy director for US-CERT for over a year and we are confident that our organization will continue its strong performance under his leadership," Stempfley said. "We wish Randy success in his future endeavors."

Lightweight Portable Security (LPS) from the US Department of Defense

Lightweight Portable Security (LPS), created by USA's Department of Defense, is a small Linux live CD focusing on privacy and security, for this reason, it boots from a CD and executes from RAM, providing a web browser, a file manager and some interesting tools. LPS-Public turns an untrusted

system into a trusted network client.

As i said before, the Lightweight Portable Security distribution was created by the Software Protection Initiative under the direction of the Air Force Research Laboratory and the US Department Of Defense. The idea behind it is that government workers can use a CDROM or USB stick to boot into a tamper proof, pristine desktop when using insecure computers such as those available in hotels or a worker s own home. The environment that it offers should be largely resistant to Internet-borne security threats such as viruses and spyware, particularly when launched from read-only media such as a CDROM. The LPS system does not mount the hard drive of the host machine, so no trace of work activity can be written to the local computer.

A new maintenance release was announced earlier this week and is accessible via the web. Changes: fixed a problem with iMac Radeon video drivers; fixed problem with trackpad not working on older MacBooks; Rdesktop - enabled compression to improve performance, fixed problem with cursor control keys not working properly; updated NVIDIA display driver to version 275.09.07; added UVC USB web camera support; added minicom 2.4 as a serial port terminal emulator under the Communications menu; updated Firefox to 3.6.19; updated DOD Configuration add-on to 1.3.1; updated Gmail S/MIME add-on to 0.5.2; updated Flash to 10.3.181.34."

RIM Adjusts to New Reality by Slashing 2,000 Jobs

BlackBerry maker Research In Motion plans to cut about 11 percent of its workforce as it struggles to keep pace with Apple and Google in the mobile market it once dominated.

The Canadian company's shares sunk 3 percent after the Monday announcement of 2,000 job cuts, a month after RIM said would reduce headcount for the first time in almost a decade.

The company, which described the cost reduction as "a prudent and necessary step" for its long-term success, said it would inform employees who will lose their jobs this week.

The job cuts, which were slightly deeper than some had expected, raised questions about whether lower costs alone would go very far in addressing RIM's lackluster financial performance or the steady erosion of its market share.

"The problem is you can't cut your way into growth or market leadership, and while I'm sure there was fat at RIM, the core problem sits squarely with management," said Ed Snyder from Charter Equity Research.

RIM also announced changes among its top executives. It said one of its three chief operating officers, Don Morrison, would retire and the other two, Thorsten Heins and Jim Rowan, would take on additional responsibilities.

"Cost-cutting is unlikely to change the competitive position for the company" or accelerate RIM's revenue growth, BGC Partners analyst Colin Gillis said.

That said, analysts also saw lower costs as a necessary adjustment to a

new reality facing RIM, once the leading force in the multi-billion dollar smartphone market.

Apple's iPhone and devices powered by Google's Android software have steadily eroded BlackBerry's market share, especially in the United States, while RIM's PlayBook, introduced in April, was a late entry to a tablet computer market that Apple's iPad virtually invented.

RIM's shares - halved so far this year - have been weighed down by earnings that missed the company's own limp forecasts and a dire warning that sales will slip further because of delays in getting new smartphones to market.

"I think this is obviously realigning the cost structure to a new growth, or sales, reality," said Peter Misek, an analyst at Jefferies & Co.

RIM said it would explain the financial impact of the cuts when it reports second-quarter results on September 15. RIM said the second-quarter and full-year outlooks it had already issued did not reflect the impact of the cuts.

Mike Abramsky, an analyst at RBC Capital Markets, called the job cuts "more significant than previously suggested." He estimated the pre-tax charge at between \$200 million and \$250 million.

Monday's announcement was the first time RIM quantified its job cut plans, which it revealed last month. The reduction will bring its workforce to 17,000.

RIM has not cut jobs in nearly a decade. In 2002 it slashed 10 percent of its staff following a dip in revenue and spiraling costs as it started selling its early BlackBerry phones via carriers.

The departure of Chief Operating Officer Don Morrison was expected. Currently on temporary medical leave, the executive will retire after more than 10 years at the company.

RIM said Thorsten Heins will now oversee both hardware and software product engineering, and Jim Rowan will take charge of operations.

RIM also promoted Patrick Spence, who has impressed analysts and investors as managing director for the Europe, Middle East and Africa region, to head of global sales and marketing.

Chief Technology Officer David Yach will focus on software platform development and developer and application ecosystem as RIM juggles upgrades to its aging BlackBerry operating system and a transition to QNX, which powers the PlayBook tablet.

His responsibility for the enterprise business has been shifted to Chief Information Officer Robin Bienfait.

The changes follow a stream of senior RIM executives who have defected lately, including two who left for rival Samsung Electronics in a month.

Misek, who has an "underperform" rating on RIM's stock, said the job cuts were less important to RIM's outlook than a successful launch of devices due within months and its eventual transition to the QNX operating system on its smartphones.

"I think the key here, more than ever, is when do their products launch and what kind of reception will they have and most importantly, when will QNX come in. We don't think those answers are here yet," he said.

Rumors Swirl Around New, Ultra-thin 15-inch MacBook

Could a bigger MacBook Air or revamped MacBook Pro be in the works?

It's been just days since Apple unveiled its revamped MacBook Air and Mac Mini lines, and there's already have a new, well-sourced Apple rumor lighting up the web. Allegedly, the California-based company is already in the final testing stages of a new, super slim 15" notebook. Sources from both TUAW and MacRumors were unable to identify it as being either in the company's Air or Pro lines, leaving us wondering what Apple might have in store.

Currently, the company's MacBook Air comes in sizes of 11" and 13", while its MacBook Pro notebooks can be had in 13", 15", and 17" screen sizes. Along with the refresh of the Air and Mini lines, Apple killed off the beloved base model MacBook, positioning the Air as the "everyday notebook."

This slimmer 15" laptop could be a top-end Air model, a redesign of the Pro series (as TUAW predicts), or perhaps its own line of new MacBooks to replace now-retired plastic versions. Whatever the case may be, the new notebooks are rumored to be on course for a late 2011 release, which could mean their official reveal will come alongside the iPhone 5.

Pentagon Shutting Down TroopTube

The US military is surrendering to YouTube. Less than three years after its launch, the Pentagon is shutting down TroopTube, a video-sharing site set up for US soldiers and their families.

A statement posted on the home page of TroopTube.tv said it would close on July 31.

TroopTube was launched in November 2008 at a time when many members of the US armed forces were restricted from using YouTube.

Its stated mission was to be "an online video site designed to help military families connect and keep in touch while miles apart."

The site, however, never really caught on and restrictions on use of YouTube were lifted by the Defense Department in February 2010.

"Since then, TroopTube's usage has declined as military members and their families adopted other methods of sharing videos," the TroopTube statement said.

The statement posted on TroopTube urged service members to "please continue to share your videos through video hosting service websites such as YouTube."

It warned them, however, to be "especially mindful of operational security

when sharing information about deployments, troop movements, and detailed personal information."

China Closes Two Fake Apple Stores

Chinese authorities have closed two fake Apple stores in the country's southwestern Yunnan province, state media reported Monday, following a storm of publicity over the rip-off shops.

An investigation of 300 IT stores in the city of Kunming found five outlets using the Apple trademark without the US giant's permission, a local news site kunming.cn said in a report carried on the government's website.

Officials found two of the so-called Apple stores did not have a business licence and ordered them to stop operating pending the results of an inquiry, the report said.

The investigation into the fake stores was launched after an American blogger posted photos of a near-flawless copy of an Apple outlet showing employees wearing the company's trademark blue T-shirts.

While the shop looked like a genuine Apple store, a closer inspection revealed poorly painted walls and a shopfront sign saying "Apple Store" - whereas the real deal just sports the now-famous fruit logo.

The Apple website lists four official stores in China - two in Beijing and two in Shanghai, and none in Kunming.

China is home to the biggest counterfeit market in the world, and despite repeated government pledges to root out fake goods, these are still widely available throughout the country.

As the craze for all things Apple slowly spreads around China, fake iPhones and iPods have also emerged.

Judge Cuts Damages In Minnesota Music Downloading Case

A federal judge in Minnesota has reduced the penalty imposed on a Brainerd woman for illegally sharing 24 songs online from \$1.5 million to \$54,000.

U.S. District Judge Michael J. Davis says in a ruling Friday that the penalty of \$62,500 per song imposed by a jury last year was appalling and unreasonable. He reduced the penalty to \$2,250 per song.

Attorneys for Jammie Thomas-Rasset had argued the \$1.5 million judgment violated the due process clause of the U.S. Constitution because the penalty had no reasonable relationship to the damage caused.

The recording industry sued Thomas-Rasset in 2006 for illegally sharing music on the file-sharing site Kazaa. Three juries have ruled against her, but the case has seen multiple appeals.

A message left for Thomas-Rasset's attorney was not immediately returned.

McDonalds WiFi Guide Pits Mac Against PC, Mac Wins

The battle of which is better, Mac or PC, is a long and unending one. Since Apple stopped its infamous Mac vs. PC commercials in 2010 - with Justin Long as a relaxed, laid back Mac and John Hodgman personifying a stuffy, uptight PC - the battle has been adopted by trolls in the comment sections of any article deemed worthy of the argument. Every once in a while, something pops up that gets commenters all riled up and ready to prove their allegiance to Apple or Microsoft.

Mac Prices Australia, an Australian site that lists pricing on Apple products, recently tweeted a TwitPic of a McDonald s WiFi guide that shows the difference between setting-up the restaurant s WiFi on a PC compared to a Mac - and the difference is pretty obvious. The relatively clean page on the right is what Mac users have to do, the two left hand pages thick with text and diagrams is for Windows. I don t think anyone in the comments can argue for the PC side in this battle, Mac wins hands down.

So why the difference? With the Mac, users simply have to click on the AirPort icon and turn the AirPort on, select McDonald s Free WiFi from the list of wireless networks, and open their browser to the McDonald s Free WiFi landing page. There are two small figures to guide the Mac user to free-WiFi goodness.

When it comes to Windows, McDonalds just has to cater for more options. Are you running XP or Windows Vista? There s also multiple settings changes to make purely because of the way Windows networking is setup.

As you can see, Mac diehards have good reason to boast about Apple s simplicity and ease of use. We have yet to see these WiFi cards in McDonalds restaurants in the U.S., but Australia is very thorough in its instructions.

Internet Explorer Users Have Lowest IQ of All Web Surfers

A newly released study has found that users of Microsoft s line of Internet Explorer browsers have the lowest IQs, on average, than people who regularly use other web browsers. Conversely, Opera users have the highest average IQ.

The study (PDF) comes via Vancouver-based 'psychometric consulting company' AptiQuant, who tested 101,326 people, from English-speaking countries, over the course of four weeks, using the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale to determine their intellectual prowess.

"Because cognitive scores are related to tech-savviness," the researchers write in the study, "we hypothesized that the choice of web browser is related to cognitive ability of an individual."

While the study is not on par with, say, a scientific paper, and IQ is hardly the only factor in determining a person s full intellect, the report certainly does a lot to make non-IE users feel good about themselves.

Perched at the pinnacle of brainpower are users of Opera, who scored an

average IQ of 126.5. Mozilla's Mac-specific browser, Camino, came in a close second, with a score of 124.4. As you might expect, the most widely used browsers fell somewhere in the middle: Safari users scored a 113.5; Chrome, 111.2; and Firefox, 108.7.

Crowded at the bottom of the brain heap are users of Internet Explorer. Of those, users of IE 9 had the best score, about an 87. And it just goes down hill from there, with each previous version's users scoring worse and worse. The plunge ends with IE 6 users, who scored about an 82.

"From the test results, it is a clear indication that individuals on the lower side of the IQ scale tend to resist a change/upgrade of their browsers," AptiQuant writes. The company also says that this information should add another nail to the coffin of the Internet Explorer line.

"It is common knowledge, that Internet Explorer Versions to 6.0 to 8.0 are highly incompatible with modern web standards," the company writes. "In order to make websites work properly on these browsers, web developers have to spend a lot of unnecessary effort". Now that we have a statistical pattern on the continuous usage of incompatible browsers, better steps can be taken to eradicate this nuisance."

Only 71 Percent of Adults Watch Online Videos

When you spend as much time online as we do, you think that every person who goes on the Internet watches online videos, at one point or another. Surprisingly, that's just not true. According to a newly released study from Pew Research, 71 percent of web surfers use video sharing sites like YouTube and Vimeo. That's up from last year's staggeringly low total of 66 percent, and 33 percent in 2006, the first year Pew polled such usage.

In addition, Pew found that 28 percent of Internet users watch online videos daily, a major jump from the 8 percent who watched every day in 2006.

Much of the growth in online video usage comes from rural Americans, who now watch Internet videos nearly twice as often as they did in 2009. This has also resulted in an increase in the number of white Americans who watch online videos, a total of 69 percent. That's up 13 points from 2009.

Despite these gains, however, online video usage among whites remains 10 percent lower than that of non-white Americans, amongst whom 79 percent partake in online video watching. The number of non-whites has also increased, from 67 percent in 2009 to 79 percent this year.

The group that watches online videos the most is, of course, young adults: 92 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds reported online video usage. Other groups that most frequently watch include Hispanics (81 percent) and people who make over \$75,000 per year (81 percent). Also, 81 percent of parents watch online videos, compared with only 61 percent of non-parents. This discrepancy, says Pew, is likely due to parents having young children at home who are more likely to watch online videos.

The increase in online video watching is also due to a surge in new content, from both amateur and professional video-makers.

More users has been a boon for online video king, YouTube. Since the end of 2005, YouTube has grown from 8 million views per day to more than 3 billion

daily views. More than 200 million of those impressions come from mobile devices.

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